

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

In response to the Final Office Action dated June 29, 2005, claims 1, 9, 13, 17-20 are amended and claims 4-8 and 11 are canceled. Claims 1-3, 9, 10 and 12-22 are now active in this application. No new matter has been added.

REJECTION OF CLAIMS UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 1-3, 9, 10 and 12-22 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Cullen (USPN 6,038,349) in view of Katayama et al. (USPN 6,424,752).

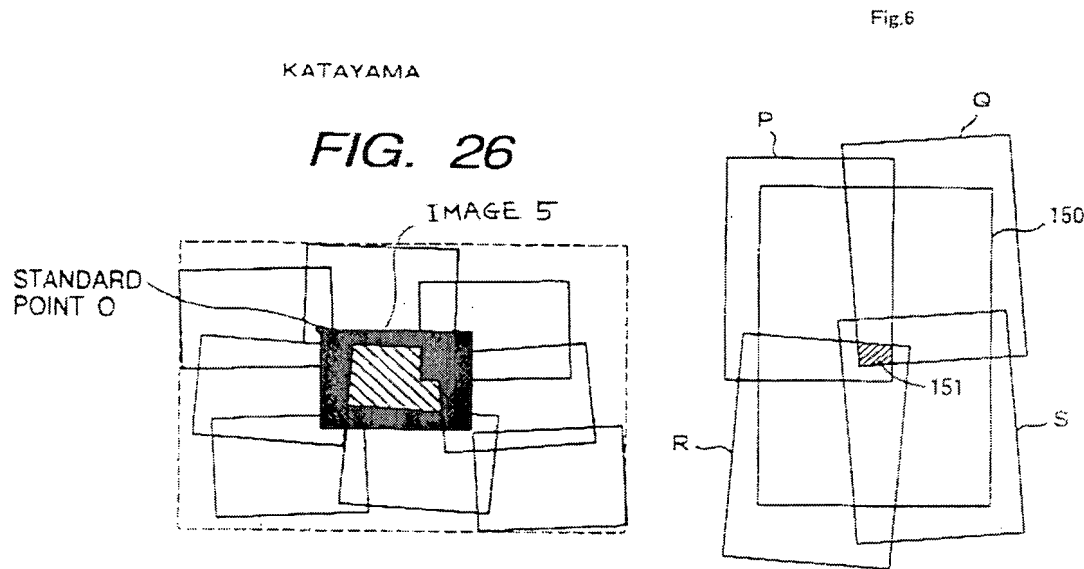
The rejections are respectfully traversed as to claims 1-3, 9, 10, 12, 17, 19 and 21.

The Examiner refers to Figs. 25 and 26 and corresponding description of Katayama et al. in maintaining that Katayama et al. discloses "...said joining portion joins said divided images by placing importance on a specific region where a greater number of said divided images overlap with each other." However, the Examiner's reasoning is incorrect as Katayama merely describes (with respect to this particular embodiment) that image 5 (out of nine images), arranged in the center, is set as a reference image. This is in contrast to the preceding embodiment where the upper left image 1 is set as a reference image.

In contrast, in the present application, as shown in Fig. 6, images are joined by placing importance on a significant region among overlap regions. More specifically, in the present application, a significant region is determined among overlap regions of each image, and the divided images are joined by placing importance on this significant region.

Katayama et al. merely describes that a center is selected and, the embodiment corresponding to Figs. 25 and 26 of Katayama et al. disclose, at best, that an image with great overlap regions is selected as a reference image.

More specifically, in Katayama, referring to Fig. 26 (see below), image 5 at the center is simply selected among the images to be joined, whereas, in the present application, referring to Fig. 6, importance is placed on (significant) region 151.



At any rate, to expedite prosecution, independent claim 1 is amended to recite, *inter alia*:

wherein

a significant overlap region is determined among overlap regions of each image, said significant overlap region is a region where a great number of said divided images overlap with each other, and

said joining portion joins said divided images by placing importance on said significant overlap region.

This subject matter corresponds, for example, to (overlap) region 151 of Fig. 6 of the present application. In contrast, the center region of Fig. 26 of Katayama et al., which the Examiner refers, is not an overlap region where a great number of the divided images overlap with each other. That is, the center region of Fig. 26 of Katayama et al. (see hatched center of Fig. 5, above), is a region where no overlap of images occurs. Thus, amended independent claims 1, 9, 17 and 19, as well as dependent claims 2, 3, 10, 12 and 21, are patentable over

Cullen and Katayama et al., considered alone or in combination. Consequently, the allowance of claims 1-3, 9-12, 17, 19 and 21, as amended, is respectfully solicited.

As to independent claims 13, 18 and 20, the Examiner refers to Fig. 18 of Katayama et al. as disclosing setting “corresponding points” (reference images). Fig. 18 of Katayama et al. merely discloses setting the upper left edge as the reference image.

In the present application, “said corresponding points are set based on one of the two divided images located further remotely from a region where at least three partial images including the other of the two divided images overlap with each other” is applied to every set of two images being jointed together. This is described beginning at line 3 on page 12 of the present application. In contrast, Katayama et al. merely describes selection of upper left edge (Fig. 18) or the center (Fig. 26) as a reference image. Katayama et al. is silent about setting it for every set to be joined.

To expedite prosecution, independent claim 13 is amended to recite, *inter alia*:

for every set of two images that are joined together, said corresponding points are set based on one of the two divided images located further remotely from a region where at least three partial images including the other of the two divided images overlap with each other.

Independent claims 18 and 20 are similarly amended.

Thus, amended independent claims 13, 18 and 20, as well as dependent claims 14-16 and 22, are patentable over Cullen and Katayama et al., considered alone or in combination. Consequently, the allowance of claims 13-16, 18, 20 and 22, as amended, is respectfully solicited.

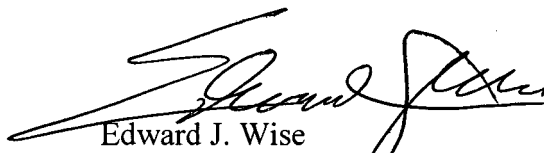
CONCLUSION

Accordingly, it is urged that the application, as now amended, overcomes the rejection of record and is in condition for allowance. Entry of the amendment and favorable reconsideration of this application, as amended, are respectfully requested. If there are any outstanding issues that might be resolved by an interview or an Examiner's amendment, Examiner is requested to call Applicants' attorney at the telephone number shown below.

To the extent necessary, a petition for an extension of time under 37 C.F.R. 1.136 is hereby made. Please charge any shortage in fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, to Deposit Account 500417 and please credit any excess fees to such deposit account.

Respectfully submitted,

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